DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 439 EA 020 165

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TITLE Strategic Planning in Education: A Guide for Policymakers.
INSTITUTION National Association of State Boards of Education, Alexandria, VA.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Definitions; *Demography; *Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; *Futures (of Society); Politics; Social Change; Technological Advancement; *Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Strategic Planning

ABSTRACT

As defined in chapter I of this guide for policymakers, strategic planning is the method by which an organization identifies relevant trends in its environment, analyzes their potential implications, and projects an integrated strategy to address these future events and their contingencies. This process differs from formalized planning, based on internal organizational goals and priorities and viewing external forces as obstacles or incentives to their achievement. Strategic planning's benefits for education, as for business, can be measured in terms of savings, improved public image, responsivenesss to social needs, and effective performance of an important mission. Chapter II helps policymakers identify major trends concerning demographics, economics, technology and lifestyle, and politics and values. Implications for U.S. schooling are also analyzed. Chapter III illustrates a nine-step strategic planning process involving (1) a planning focus; (2) a trend statement; (3) a trend analysis; (4) a need for action statement; (5) a resource audit; (6) an action priority; (7) an organizational response; (8) a strategic plan; and (9) a restatement of mission. Chapter IV provides "starter" exercises on two topics: the computer revolution and the growth of language minorities. Chapter V concludes the paper by outlining planning elements in the policy arena, such as foresight, goal-setting, budgeting, management and evaluation, and leadership. (MLH)

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Strategic Planning in Education:

A GUIDE FOR POLICYMAKERS

BY HARRY A. COOPER

A Publication of the
National Association of State Boards of Education
701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

EA 020 165

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Association of State Boards of Education gratefully acknowledges the state board chairmen who generously participated in the 1984 Leadership Conference at Breckenridge, Colorado. Their thoughts and experiences gave us a basis for this publication.

We extend appreciation to Dr. George Wilkinson, United Way of America, for his central role in facilitating the Leadership Conference, to Harry Cooper for writing and editing this publication, and to Terri Perun for her support in its development and completion.

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National Association of
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction i

I. Defining Strategic Planning 1

II. Scanning Our Environment for Main Trends 3

III. Working with Strategic Planning 6

IV. Two Starter Exercises: Computer Technology and Language Minorities 8

V. Planning in the Policy Arena 12

I. DEFINING STRATEGIC PLANNING

Our society, it is fair to say, has become preoccupied with the future. The business of spotting new trends has now become a trend itself. Such organizations as Futures Group, Forecasting International, Westrend Group and the World Future Society are flourishing. Several factors – the increasing rate of social change, the tightening relationship of economic and political life, world interdependency, the mounting supply of statistical information and sophisticated means to analyze it – all these have contributed to the boom in the future. Businesses are seeking to capitalize on the new information technologies to get the jump in a fiercely competitive world. Our interest as individuals is equally keen. Whether inspired by millenial hopes or fears – the promises of technology or the spectre of depletion or destruction – we look anxiously ahead to what the future may or may not hold.

The future is uncertain, and we must be skeptical of all who claim otherwise. However, barring natural or man-made catastrophes, which have always been history-changing forces, there is much that we do know with some assurance. For instance, we know that our population is undergoing a profound aging; that minorities of all kinds will soon constitute one-third of our youth; that the role of women at home and work is changing dramatically, affecting both jobs and the family; that new high-technologies are revolutionizing production and also contributing to the shift towards a service economy; and that the politics of the future will be marked by special interests competing for scarce resources. All these trends, which we will discuss at some length in the second chapter, have important implications for education; most of them we can begin planning for today.

These are among the trends we feel we know best. Yet in every discussion of the future, we must be vigilant in defining our terms and scrutinizing our own analysis. Even professional forecasters, who draw on an impressive array of data and method, often end up with very different scenarios. Take the issue of cultural diversity, for example. Are we becoming more diverse and demanding correspondingly more varied goods and services, in a phenomenon that has been called "demassification"? Or is mass production and communication making us more uniform, in both developed and less developed nations, as many observers believe? The answer, if there is one, depends on definition of terms (who is "we"?), framing of the problem (what should be considered as "culture"?), data to be considered (statistical or anecdotal? economic, sociological, or psychological?), and the values and prejudices of the forecaster. The more broadly a question is framed, the less likely it will be to have a single answer. Remember: those who forecast the future can justify present policies, and those who frame the questions we pose of the future often control the debate. Planning is by nature political.

Strategic planning is no exception to all of this – is it not an objective process. The need to define terms, frame the problem, clarify assumptions and uncover values is crucial to clear-sighted planning. What strategic planning can do is outline, limit, and manage the tricky process of planning for futures. Focusing on an individual organization and its mission, strategic planners selectively scan the outside environment for well-defined trends which promise to have the greatest impact on the organization, and then trace all their possible consequences. In other words:

> Strategic planning is the method by which an organization identifies relevant trends in its environment, analyzes their potential implications, and projects an integrated strategy to address these future events and their contingencies.

Before we examine this definition in detail, let us pose a question which is probably on your mind at this point: How does strategic planning differ from standard planning, and why does it merit special consideration?

Although there are as many types of planning as there are organizations, it is fair to say that typical planning is generated by internal organizational goals and priorities. The typical plan charts a course of action to achieve these goals, accounting for external forces primarily as obstacles or incentives to their achievement. The process is often formal and the product is schematic, documenting and projecting current activity in relation to stated objectives of the organization.

Strategic planning reverses this emphasis. It begins with a careful look at the operating environment of the organization, and proceeds to develop a responsive plan, fitting internal goals and capabilities to external trends. In a sense, then, strategic planning may seem more reactive than standard approaches; it

accepts the limitations of the environment. In a more important sense, however, strategic planning is proactive; it seeks an educated jump on the future.

If a main focus of typical planning is accountability, the emphasis of strategic planning is foresight. This foresight is achieved through a dynamic, informal process which results in a forward-looking framework of priorities and directions for the organization. When this framework is completed by the more formal processes of management and evaluation (see the final chapter), the result is an effective strategic plan combining foresight with accountability.

Strategic planning is now emerging as a powerful, general policymaking tool. Yet it was pioneered by businesses seeking to respond to novel, specific concerns. In the late 1960s, projecting that civil rights protest and student unrest would herald broader social change and government regulation, a few businesses started to build projected "environmental" changes into their long-range planning. General Electric, an early pioneer, began placing women and minorities in management tracks well before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issued guidelines, and thus avoided the less efficient rush to comply which faced other companies. Only a few firms had this foresight. Most industries were also slow to see public environmental concern and the approach of government regulation, with costly results to them in terms of profit and public image.

In recent years, the path from interest group pressure to public concern to media coverge to government action has been well-traveled, making corporate strategic planning somewhat easier. Since the mid-70s, the "foresight" component of business planning has improved. Industries have adopted an "issues management" process (the term was coined in 1975) to monitor every step of the issues pathway and to influence or prepare for each one in advance. Today, many businesses are moving from a rigid framework, in which strategic planning is performed only by a special office or division, to a more integrated approach, employing strategic thinking in all phases of decisionmaking. Used by only a handful of firms five years ago, a strategic planning process now guide the decisions of over 150 corporations.

Profit, competitive advantage, control of an uneas relationship with government and the public – thes motives may seem foreign to the enterprise of educa tion. Yet education does need strategic plannin today, as badly as business did fifteen years ago. Th emphasis and approach may differ, but the needs ar similar.

Perhaps more than with business, our system o education is affected by public attitudes. In a time o tax revolts, shrinking budgets and disaffection wit government, public support must be actively won not assumed. The federal government's changin role must be watched closely for its effects on suc groups as handicapped, disadvantaged, non-English speaking, and college-bound students. Educator must work closely with local government units a their influence increases. More broadly, shifts i populations, values, leisure, technology and all facet of home and work affect how well schools fulfill thei mission, and how that mission must evolve.

Strategic planning for a non-profit enterprise suc as education does present special challenges. Busines planning services the overriding goal of corporat health and profit. Education planning, however, mus serve bewildering, often implicit goals, economi social and political. Effective education plannin must encompass a broad time frame, from short-ter funding cycles (which have too often been the limi of governmental planning) to long-term social need and trends. And education planning must take int account the broad range of social forces which influ ence the mission of public schooling.

Of course, we cannot hope to anticipate or forese everything. But the planning method we will presen by relating internal needs and goals to external force is one step towards meeting the challenges ahea The benefits, for education as for business, can b measured in terms of savings, improved public imag responsiveness to social needs, and the effective pe formance of an important mission.

II. SCANNING OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR THE MAIN TRENDS

The first step in effective strategic planning is to explore the broad forces at work in society, which is, after all, the larger context of any particular organization. In this chapter, we will look at the trends which seem most likely to shape American society through the rest of this century and into the next, and their implications for education. Such a discussion could be organized in many ways, given all the interrelationships at work. We will consider the four headings of demographics, economics, technology and lifestyle, and politics and values.

DEMOGRAPHICS

▶ *TRENDS*

It is said that we are a nation of immigrants, an aging nation, a nation on the move. All are true. More than any other factor, shifts and changes in population have defined our country, and will continue to do so.

- **The Aging Baby Boom.** This great bulge in our population will continue to shape and strain our institutions as it moves forward in time. Through the '80s, the 35-44 age group will grow 40%. Then, starting in 1990, seniors will begin a rapid rise, probably doubling their numbers between the years 2000 and 2050. They will be the most educated, politically active group of older Americans ever.
- **Minorities.** The growth of minorities has not been a "boom," but rather a steadily growing wave. Though Black growth has slowed somewhat, the Hispanic population is soaring, by 60% over the last ten years. They will probably be our largest minority by 1990. And we are now absorbing our second biggest immigrant flood ever, largely of Asian and island peoples. By 2000, California and 53 cities will have "minority majorities."
- **Mobility.** While overall growth of our population is slowing, we are rapidly moving south and west. Those regions grew over 20% in the '70s, and no end is in sight. *U.S. News and World Report* called it "the most pronounced demographic shift of this era." In addition, the flight to suburbs continues unabated, and even non-metropolitan areas are showing an increase.
- **Youth.** We are now starting to feel the small but significant "echo" of the baby boom. The drop in school enrollment is turning around this year for K-4 students, and will refill high schools and colleges somewhat in the future, although less in the "frost belt." By 1990, the very young and very old will both be important parts of our population.

▶ *IMPLICATIONS*

The implications of all this are great. To put it broadly, our major challenge in the years ahead is to provide an increasingly diverse nation with consistent educational opportunity across ethnic, geographic, age and socio-economic divisions.

To meet the needs of minorities, we must target programs in early childhood education through pre-college education for groups at risk. An unmet challenge for the '80s is to raise Hispanic college enrollment and retention.

Adult education will become increasingly important as workers retrain and older citizens exercise their educational rights. In this field, we must define our role in relation to industry, government and voluntary organizations, who are currently by far the main providers.

The decisions we make today concerning language education, both English and other languages for all students, will dictate how well we communicate as a society tomorrow. A vigorous approach to both will be the fairest solution to a politically volatile question.

Facilitating the movement of teachers and resources to regions where they are most needed will be a major challenge. Cooperation between states, for instance, in agreeing on credential transfer for teachers, will be essential.

In view of the projected upturn in elementary enrollment nationally, areas that have been experiencing declines should evaluate school closing decisions carefully. Another option is "merging" schools with other social services, so that buildings can remain open through sharing.

ECONOMICS

▶ *TRENDS*

We may not know what will happen to the economy tomorrow, but we are aware of some sobering long-term trends. Most of them are driven by the demographics we have just considered.

- **Dependency.** As our population ages, the "dependency ratio" – the ratio of active workers to retirees – will grow worse. And by and large, young minorities will be supporting an older white population. Thus high poverty rates for Blacks and Hispanics, which have persisted through the 70's and 80's, do not bode well for society as a whole.
- **Women and the Family.** The participation of women in the work force will continue to approach the rate for men, and the number of two-earner families will rise accordingly. The number of single-parent families is also up: almost half of the children born in 1980 will basically be raised by one parent. This has been true of Black families for years: over 40% of them are female-run. In short: expanded multiple roles for women.
- **Retraining the Workforce.** Because of demographics, 90% of the 1990 workforce is already on the job, and these workers face major changes and dislocations. First, there is the historic shift from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, which has been underway for some time and may be stabilizing. Second, there are the major effects, as yet unclear, which new technologies will have on both of these sectors.
- **Regionalism.** As the South and West continue to post income gains and attract high-technology and energy industries, regional disparities will increase. The deterioration of the urban infrastructure, as well as the older suburbs, will be a major problem – in overrun Sunbelt cities as well as in the North.
- **Internationalization.** The era of post-war U.S. primacy, economic and political, is over. The soaring national debt, the over-valued dolla and the influx of cheaper foreign goods are i dicators of current and future shift and strai in the international order. Mutual understan ing and agreement must provide the basis f healthy competition and coexistence.

▶ *IMPLICATIONS*

Above all, the "dependency ratio" holds an importa lesson for education. Providing equal education opportunity for minorities and women in all field including math and science, is a matter of nation survival, since these are tomorrow's workers.

The influx of women into the workforce will pla great demands on day care. It will also make recruiti for the lower-paid, lower-status jobs traditional held by women – including teaching – more difficu until action is taken to equalize pay and benefi compared to other professions.

The changing nature of family life – divor single-parenting, two-earner families – will ma growing up difficult and confusing for many you people. The steadily rising teen suicide rate (n over 5,000/year) is one symptom among many. Cou seling, family life education, and schooling and m terials at all levels must reflect these new realities.

Business and industry are well aware of the ne for an educated workforce, as shown by thousands partnerships with schools now in place. The ch lenge for education: to be flexible in accepting c laborations and active in fostering them. This cou help compensate for math and science teacher sho ages, as well as build a long-term business-educati relationship.

Viewed nationally, education will have to spond to increasing disparities among regions a between cities and suburbs. The problem will be promote equitable financing within the context limited resources.

Finally, our education system must enter t global community. Understanding world langua and cultures is crucial for robust intellectual a economic life today.

TECHNOLOGY AND LIFESTYLE

▶ *TRENDS*

The epochal high-technology revolution is all around us, yet its future effects, both long- and short-term, are uncertain. There is disagreement about the types of new jobs that will be created and about how far technology will define our lifestyle of the future.

- **Jobs (short-term).** The shortage of technical professionals will continue through the 80's. But the revolution in computers and related technologies will produce fewer skilled jobs than once thought. Most new jobs will be cl cal, janitorial, sales and fast food-related, a many of these will involve low-level interact with a computer. The high technology revolut in other words, is part of the broader shift t wide variety of service industries.
- **Lifestyle (short-term).** The impact of comput and computer-aided technology is inevita It is estimated that 80 million home comput will be in use by the year 2000, or almost o for each home that now has television. Po

bilities for shopping, working and learning at home are great, but how much we will want to sacrifice "getting out" is uncertain.

- **Jobs (long-term).** As computers take on routine tasks, it is possible that most work will require more skill and higher-level thinking, placing a higher premium on education. However, another scenario is a bi-level workforce, with many more operatives than controllers of the new technology. The reality will probably fall between, with many jobs enhanced by technology and many others remaining routine.
- **Lifestyle (long-term).** More work at home could lead to changes in the lifetime work patterns as well. Traditional work-retirement could yield to cycles of work, education, leisure and training. Later (or part-time) retirement, which saves social costs, is already becoming popular.

▶ *IMPLICATIONS*

Whatever scenario proves true, one thing is clear. Schools will have to prepare students to adapt to change as never before. The ability to learn and conceptualize will become as important as factual knowledge and specific skills.

Jobs will demand frequent retraining to keep up with technology. And as patterns of work and leisure change, education will help people make creative use of their time. These trends, together with the aging of the population, will call for schools to become vigorous providers of continuing education.

The immediate problem for schools, however, is what to do with the revolution in their own backyard. The computer is arguably the most important educational tool since the printing press. It is still a relative newcomer in the classroom, but its use cannot afford to lag.

The standard approach of a computer class – like a typing class – is fast becoming irrelevant, since the technology is changing and growing easier all the time. Computers are best used as an educational tool, with promising applications through curricula and in all grades. Of course, substantial change will be needed in classroom organization and teaching method. The experience of businesses which have already made the difficult transition should be a valuable resource.

POLITICS AND VALUES

▶ *TRENDS*

Politics is probably the least certain area for prediction, since the business of detecting political and value shifts is extremely subjective, and such trends are known to be precarious. With that in mind, here are some suggestions.

- **Special Interests.** Politics seems to be following the lead of social institutions in that it is becoming diverse and multiple. The number of independent voters continues to rise, indicating the ascendancy of issue over party-voting. Special interests and political action committees are exerting greater power.
- **Individualism.** Citizens are actively pursuing their own particular interests themselves. Tax revolts, class action suits, referenda, initiatives and litigation of all kinds, it seems, are here to stay.
- **Decentralization.** Decisionmaking has become more and more decentralized, reflecting both ideology and increasing regional diversity. A major issue to be decided centrally, however, will be the distribution of resources among regions. Increasing congressional representation (due to population) in the South and West will be a factor in the outcome.
- **Limited Resources.** In the federal budget, social programs will suffer as defense spending and retirement payments, it seems, will continue to climb. At the same time, state budgets, which have remained fairly level for the last ten years, show no signs of change. Thus states will struggle to pick up dropped federal services, and education will have to compete to maintain its share of this pie.

▶ *IMPLICATIONS*

As decisionmaking becomes increasingly local and regional, education will be faced with the challenge of building a political base of support from which to compete for limited resources. Building coalitions across parties and interests will become crucial as the political landscape diversifies.

For state boards of education in particular, this will involve defining and consolidating a role in relation to other policymakers, both within and outside the education community. Close links should be fostered with local and regional planners.

Frequent hearings, disputes and threatened litigation will continue to be a problem for education in general and state boards in particular, unless alternative resolution procedures can be promoted.

Another manifestation of the trend towards individualism has been the exercise of choice in schooling and the rise of home schools, religious fundamentalist schools, and private schools generally. State boards should focus on strengthening the base of support for public education, fostering already improved relations with established private schools, and avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

III. WORKING WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING

Now that we have reviewed a number of significant social trends, and their dynamics and implications, where do we go from here? Even such a highly condensed overview of our environment seems overwhelming, for we know a great deal about what our society will look like in the near future, and the various paths it may take further ahead.

No organization can hope to consider and plan for every social change. The key to strategic planning is to select the trends which promise to be most relevant to the organization and its mission, and then plan for those as exhaustively as possible. This may involve organizational reappraisal, clarification of personal values, and soul-searching in no small measure. It is hard work, but the process is a rewarding one.

The step-by-step strategic planning method we will outline and sample here is based roughly on a system developed by United Way of America for itself and other not-for-profit organizations, which was based, in turn, on corporate models. It was outlined for us at the Breckenridge conference and at the NASBE Annual Meeting in October by George Wilkinson of the United Way. What follows is our own adaptation for state board members and other education policymakers.

The process works best in small groups, which makes it ideal for state boards of education. We have not specified the particular operation of the planning sessions. This depends on you and the culture of your organization. However, we have recommended several special techniques which are particularly useful at various points in the planning process.

▶ *STEP ONE: Planning Focus*

Identify and describe the focus of your planning – your organization or agency and its mission. This should include a general statement of vision and a list of goals, responsibilities or objectives. The mission may be stated broadly at first; you may find yourself refining it later. The outcome of planning is strategy to help your organization fulfill its mission.

▶ *STEP TWO: Trend Statement*

Identify and accurately state the major trends influencing your organization now and in the future. In scanning for these trends, consider four possible areas: the "macro-environment," or general societal trends (such as we considered in the last chapter); the "industrial environment," or trends that will affect your industry (education) in particular; the "competitive environment," or trends among institutions that provide similar services to yours or compete for common funds; and the "internal environment," or trends within your organization that will affect its ability to respond to external pressures.

▶ *STEP THREE: Trend Analysis*

Consider the impacts of these trends on your organization and its mission. To do this, choose *one* trend and frame several strategic issues which you think the trend will raise for your organization. Then, for each issue, consider all the strategic challenges (threats and opportunities) which that issue might present.

Figure 1. Futures Wheel

A "futures wheel" (Figure 1) is a useful tool for exploring the implications of any issue. Placing the main issue at center, the planning group spins out implications in a brainstorm session, building outwards to third- and fourth-order effects. The group then labels each implication as "threat" or "opportunity," and uses the diagram as a springboard for further discussion.

▶ *STEP FOUR: Need for Action*

Rate the probable need for action on each strategic challenge. For each threat and opportunity, discuss its degree of impact or importance, probability of occurrence, timing – immediate, near (1-2 years

mid-range (3-5 years), or distant (6 or more years) – and whether it falls under mandated or discretionary responsibility of your organization. Taken together, these factors represent the need for action, to be rated low, medium or high for each challenge.

▶ *STEP FIVE: Resource Audit*

Rate the probable ability of your organization to respond to each challenge. To determine your ability to influence or respond effectively to each challenge, briefly consider your relevant strengths and weaknesses: the resources, expertise and authority of your organization in that area and the limits to that power. Rate your organization's ability to influence or respond effectively as low, medium or high for each challenge. The "nominal group technique," or secret ballot approach, is effective in these steps for eliciting unswayed opinions. The tallied results are then used as a basis for further discussion.

▶ *STEP SIX: Action Priority*

Rank the challenges in order of priority for action. The "action priority' of any issue is the product of need for action (Step Four) and ability to respond (Step Five).

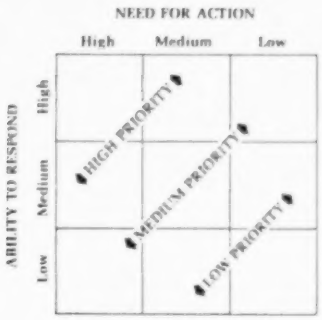

Figure 2. Decision Matrix

A simple tool like the "decision matrix" (Figure 2) can aid in ranking any group of objects along two common dimensions. Using the matrix if you find it helpful, rank the challenges from top to bottom in priority. No matter what techniques are used, the setting of priorities is a difficult, subjective problem, best addressed by open full-group discussion.

▶ *STEP SEVEN: Organizational Response*

Consider possible organizational responses to these challenges. The heart of the planning begins here: deciding where to focus response and resources, and what action to plan. You have simplified the task, however, by identifying priority areas within the trend under discussion. This analysis should readily surface a number of possible strategic directions or responses. Starting at the top of the action priority list, consider possible responses to each challenge, discussing the prospects, feasibiliy, costs and repercussions of each response. Note that planned action in one area may positively or negatively affect your ability to respond to other challenges. The "futures wheel" may be helpful again in tracing the internal and external implications of a given response. "Scenario building" – organizing challenge and response into several probable patterns or sequences of events – is a further way to conceptualize planning alternatives.

▶ *STEP EIGHT: Strategic Plan*

Integrate your analysis of organizational responses into a strategic plan. Drawing on your discussion in the last step, select and organize your favored responses into an integral plan. The strategic plan is best presented as a planning brief, which should include:

- a restatement of the environmental trend in question, and the strategic issues raised for the organization;
- a listing of threats and opportunities posed by these issues;
- a ranking of these challenges by action priority, noting need for action (impact, timing, probability) and your organization's ability to influence each issue;
- a primary timetable of organizational response, assigning tasks, cost, responsible agencies or individuals, and completion dates, as far as possible;
- a contingency plan or plans, less detailed than the primary timetable, to be used as a starter plan if specified threats or opportunities prove more or less significant than assumed.
- a back-up discussion explaining the selection of the base and contingency plans with reference to the trends, challenges, priorities, and responses developed above.

You will find that not every trend in question leads to the formulation of a full strategic plan. Record the ideas developed anyway. They may be relevant to subsequent sessions, when the group returns to Step Three and initiates consideration of another major trend.

▶ *STEP NINE: Restatement of Mission (optional)*

Revise or expand your initial mission statement (Step One) to reflect and structure strategic plans. A viable mission statement encompasses the priorities and plans of your organization. Reviewing your completed planning session, formulate a general objective for your organization in addressing the trend in question, as well as several strategic directions which reflect the specific responses you have planned. Integrating this into the mission statement will allow future budgeting and evaluation (see Chapter Five) to tie in directly to your organizational objectives and priorities.

IV. TWO STARTER EXERCISES: COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND LANGUAGE MINORITIES

To help you begin thinking in a strategic planning mode, let us rehearse the first stages of a hypothetical planning process for two strategic environmental trends: the computer technology revolution and the growth of non-English speaking minorities. These two trends promise to have high educational impacts. They also demonstrate the range and flexibility of strategic planning applications. You may think of each exercise as the first half of a planning brief, whose revision and completion is up to you. Much of the material for this example was drawn from the Breckenridge conference. The information presented is general; you may wish to complete the brief in relation to your own local experience or specific policy setting. You may well disagree with some of the specific assertions that follow; all planning has a subjective element. Our hope is to stimulate your reactions and your thinking in a strategic planning mode.

EXERCISE ONE: PLANNING FOR THE COMPUTER REVOLUTION

▶ *STEP ONE: Planning Focus*

Focus: state boards of education, collectively (NASBE) and individually. Mission: to provide a thorough and efficient education throughout each state, using the support and pooled resources of the association.

▶ *STEP TWO: Trend Statement*

The Computer Revolution. The proliferation of computers at home, school and work to perform a growing number of tasks is revolutionizing our way of life. By 1990, it is estimated that half of working Americans will be making use of electronic terminals on the job. 8.3 million personal computers were sold last year, and the number in use may reach 80 million (about as many homes as now have TVs) by the year 2000. In education, the computer is still a relative newcomer. Three-fourths of all school districts use computers in classrooms, but a twenty-fold increase is needed to bring computers within reach of all students each day. Computers are redefining the knowledge and skills we need. Elementary pupils now spend less time on calcuation. It is thought that most of an engineer's knowledge becomes either obsolete or computerized every decade. Clearly the opportunities and threats posed by this revolution are great, and the response of our educational system to the challenge is still uncertain.

▶ *STEP THREE: Trend Analysis*

(For reasons of space, only challenges with fairly high importance and probability have been retained in this brief.)

ISSUE 1 — Education for a Technological Future

Students should be prepared to meet the changing demands of the workplace and to understand the social implications of a computerized world.

Opportunity (distant) — As computers continue to take over routine work functions, jobs will demand more skills, higher-level thinking and continuous retraining, while leisure time will grow. Education and the ability to learn will become increasingly valuable in all aspects of life.

Threat (immediate) — Displacement of manufacturing and service workers by computer-aided technology, and a comparatively small rise in jobs for technicians and programmers, compared to clerical and manual workers, will make the workplace confusing and frustrating for many.

Opportunity (mid-term) — The rapid pace of technological change will provide new intellectual challenges for secondary classrooms, comprising such issues as privacy and communication, intelligence and computing, and engineering and society.

ISSUE 2 — The Role and Organization of School

The educational possibilities and demands of technology will make home and work efficient learning centers, and may alter school organization accordingly.

Threat (near) — If math and science education and teaching are now revitalized, intensive on-the-job training may eclipse the classroom as provider of vocational preparation.

Opportunity and threat (mid-term) — The rapid rise of home computing and educational software represents an important learning resource if linked and integrated with school, as well as a competitor to tele-

vision. Yet if ignored by schools, home computers could become, like television, an uneven distraction from the school curriculum.

Opportunity (immediate) – The current interest of business in collaborating with schools could, if educators demonstrate eagerness and flexibility, become a significant new resource.

ISSUE 3 – Changes in Teaching and Learning

Computers open new vistas in educational method, but significant rethinking of current practice will be needed to exploit this possibility.

Opportunity (near) – computers can be used across the curriculum both as drill/tutorial devices and to teach higher-level skills through games, simulations, and tool-making to solve problems. However, these higher applications require a degree of student autonomy and an emphasis on intuitive, conceptual learning that runs counter to current educational trends.

Threat (near) – Failure to explore fully the potential of computers now in schools may weaken the momentum of acquisition and leave education well behind the rest of society in computer use. Structural issues such as market size and software piracy threaten to handicap schools in relation to home computer use.

ISSUE 4 – Fair Access to Technology

An expensive technology raises the problem of fair distribution among all students, a problem exacerbated by home computing and local purchasing initiatives.

Threat (near) – While unequal distribution of computers should be expected at first, studies have shown high concentration of computers in large suburban schools, and the greater use of computers by the best students. This issue is magnified by the ownership pattern for home computers. The problem is especially appropriate for state education leaders to address.

▶ *STEPS 4 and 5: Need for Action and Resource Audit*

1. Technology challenges schools by expanding the creative potential in work and leisure. Need for action: low. Ability to respond: medium.
2. Technology causes workplace change and dislocations. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: low.
3. Technology raises new issues for the classroom. Need for action: low. Ability to respond: medium.
4. Intensive on-the-job training threatens the school role in vocational education. Need for action: medium. Ability to respond: medium.
5. Home computing boom may upset or complement the school curriculum. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: low.
6. Business interest offers schools a collaborative resource. Need for action: medium. Ability to respond: high.
7. The computer represents a fundamentally new learning tool. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: high.
8. Schools threaten to lag behind home and work in computer use. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: medium.
9. Unequal distribution and access may imbalance school computer use. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: medium.

▶ *STEP 6: Action Priority*

(Questions of priority are highly subjective, since margins for error and disagreement in considering impact, timing, probability and ability to influence are multiplied.)

EXAMPLE: 7 9 8 6 5 4 2 3 1

high average low

(This "scale ranking" method may help the group to visualize the process of assigning priorities)

▶ *STEPS 7 and 8: Organizational Response and Strategic Plan*

(These are left to you! Refer back to the previous chapter for guidance. You may continue to consider the issue globally, or apply it to your particular position and setting.)

EXERCISE TWO: PLANNING FOR THE GROWTH OF LANGUAGE MINORITIES

▶ *STEP 1: Planning Focus*

Focus: state boards of education, collectively (NASBE) and individually. Mission: to provide a thorough and efficient education throughout each state, using the support and pooled resources of the association.

▶ *STEP 2: Trend Statement*

The Growth of Language Minorities. Minorities of all kinds will constitute 20-25% of our population, and 30% of our youth, by 1990. In some states, such as Texas and California, minorities will constitute 40% of births in that year. By 2000, California and 53 cities will have "minority majorities." Hispanic peoples will be our single largest minority, due both to continued immigration and very high population growth rates (about 60% over the last decade). The impact of this growth on our schools, and the need to respond, will be tremendous. Exact national statistics on current numbers of students with English deficiencies are not collected, and future projections are even more difficult to make. However, it has been estimated that there are 3.6 million students between the ages of five and fourteen now classified as LEP (limited-English-proficient) and receiving special services. The National Center for Education Statistics projects that their numbers will increase by 400,000 by the end of the decade and by an additional 600,000 in the 1990s. Whatever the exact figures, the great number of students who speak languages other than English, and who may have various levels of proficiency in English, will represent both a challenge and a resource for our education system. Specific trends affecting education include changes in federal support, new directions in programs for LEP students, ongoing school improvement efforts, unmet challenges of equity and opportunity, and new issues of cultural maintenance and interchange.

▶ *STEP 3: Trend Analysis*

ISSUE 1: The Role of the States

Decreasing commitment of resources and regulatory control at the federal level will bring changes in state-local relationships in serving LEP students.

Opportunity (immediate) – The apparent federal return to a "hands off" approach to local program choices creates an expanded area of states' authority in the guidance, support, coordination and evaluation of programs.

Threat (near) – Previous patterns of close federal-local relations in administering Title VII support have left some state bureaucracies without the background or resources needed to fill new roles. Expanded commitments of resources and expertise w be needed.

ISSUE 2: New Program Directions

Recent research is demonstrating the effectiven of a wide range of programs to teach LEP students.

Opportunity (near) – A wide range of progra options and strategies – bilingual, ESL, structur immersion, computer assisted instruction – is n available. States can play a major role in promoti services by developing program guidelines and st dent classification criteria, and by providing te nical assistance in fitting programs to the differ needs of various LEP student populations.

ISSUE 3: School Improvement Efforts

Recent excellence reforms represent both thre and opportunities for LEP students.

Threat (near) – Action in most states to incre credit requirements for graduation and institute p ficiency testing may adversely affect morale, retenti and graduation of some LEP students, unless st are taken to provide alternative procedures or spe support.

Opportunity (near) – The excellence movem and its reforms, by setting a new standard for all s dent achievement, can be used to emphasize the i integration of LEP students in the school mainstrea

ISSUE 4: The Challenge of Equity

The under-representation of language mino students in special programs underlines continu gaps in opportunity.

Threat (mid-term) – Continuing poor represe tion of Hispanic and other language minority stud in special education, vocational classes, gifted a talented programs and other special services threat to create a bi-level system in which these stude only receive basic education. Hispanic college rollment and retention has not yet improved, indi ing the need for greater efforts for their full inclus in college preparatory education.

Opportunity (near) – The interest and suppor parents and communities is a key factor in overc ing student language and educational deficits. S boards can foster this resource by providing for for recognition and policy input.

ISSUE 5: Cultural Pluralism

Population statistics indicate that we are ente a new era in which our society will be possibly m lingual, and increasingly multi-cultural.

Opportunity (distant) – The presence of l numbers of language minority students in the sch will represent a major new linguistic and cult learning resource for all students, which can be malized through new materials and classroom proaches.

Threat (mid-term) – Language and cultural maintenance is a growing concern among native Americans, Hispanics, and other minority groups and will continue to be so as educational mainstreaming progresses. Attention to these legitimate concerns through the use of appropriate, responsive teaching strategies and materials will promote goals of cultural understanding, English proficiency for all, and political harmony around a potentially volatile issue.

▶ *STEPS 4 and 5: Need for Action and Resource Audit*

1. The diminishing federal role creates new state program and policy opportunities. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: high.
2. Lack of experience and resources handicaps some states in new roles. Need for action: high. Ability to respond: low.
3. New program options create new state leadership potentials. Need for action: medium. Ability to respond: high.
4. New graduation requirements may threaten LEP student retention. Need for action: medium. Ability to respond: high.
5. The Excellence movement makes available a new standard for LEP student achievement. Need for action: low. Ability to respond: medium.
6. Low representation in special or advanced programs threatens LEP student achievement and college preparation. Need for action: high. Abilty to respond: high.
7. Growing minority parent and community interest can be mobilized. Need for action: medium. Ability to respond: medium.
8. Language minority students represent a new learning resource. Need for action: low. Ability to respond: medium.
9. Language and cultural maintenance is a growing minority concern. Need for action: low. Ability to respond: medium.

▶ *STEP 6: Action Priority*

1	6	3	4	2	7	5	9	8
high			average			low		

▶ *STEPS 7 and 8: Organizational Response and Strategic Plan*

(These are left to you! Refer back to the previous chapter for guidance. You may continue to consider the issue globally, or apply it to your particular position and setting.)

V. PLANNING IN THE POLICY ARENA

If you have followed our look at strategic planning this far, you now have some understanding of how a strategic planning process may be used by a hypothetical planning group. But, you may ask, how does all this apply to an actual policymaking body, facing such realities as budgeting, management and policy implementation?

Fortunately, the application is not impossible, or even that difficult. A state board of education – or, for that matter, a local board, legislative co agency division or advocacy group – itsel natural strategic planning unit, thanks to size and existing working relationships. Th ing suggestions for the practice of planning ar primarily to state boards of education, and applicable to other groups concerned with e policy as well. These are notes towards the use of strategic planning in the policy arena.

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1 FORESIGHT. The "foresight" or "environmental scanning" element of strategic planning, which we worked through in the second chapter, is a first step that sets the course for the planning to follow. The key to efficiency in the foresight process, which can easily grow out of control due to its potentially limitless scope, is the use of existing resources. First, draw on the pool of professional skills within your immediate group. Almost any experience in business, politics, economics, humanities or technology will be useful in focusing the investigation. Second, examine closely the planning efforts of area or state business or governmental units.

Nearly all states have a state planning agency, usually located within the governor's office, or sometimes within a management and budget agency. Although once concerned mainly with physical and economic planning, many of these agencies have broadened their scope to include health and other human services. Special commissions, legislative studies and higher education system reports are other sources of ready-made analysis. Some major state planning documents of recent years include: "Private Choices, Public Strategies" (Blue Ribbon Panel, State of Colorado); "Texas Trends" (Texas 2000 Committee, State of Texas); "Choices for Pennsylvania" (Office of the Governor); and "The Baby-Boom Generation: Impacts on State Revenue and Spending, 1950-2025" (Illinois Budget Office). Such documents not only contain background data and projections which can inform your own planning; they are also important data in themselves, since their recommendations may well affect future private and public decisions.

2 GOAL-SETTING. The planning method we have outlined creates strategies to address specific issues. To be influential, the resulting "issue briefs" must be integrated with established goal-setting and planning processes of your organization. V your standard planning cycle (annual, five-y you should begin it with strategic planning to develop issue-specific strategies, which be translated into the formal statements plans or objectives used by your organizati regular planning cycle exists, then your need tute periodic strategic planning is all the mor

3 BUDGETING. This function is probably tral constraint on governmental cha innovation. Standard incremental budge proaches, which focus decisions on incre reducing allocations for existing objects of ture, exacerbate the problem. The use of a planning process, preceding and leading budgeting cycle, can afford policymakers perspective, a greater sense of control over p and even increasing creativity and flexibili locating admittedly limited resources. Th program-based budgeting to determine the to (direct and indirect) of each current and organizational objective or direction, is a hi ommended planning tool. Although state b education do not have final budget authority developed strategic planning perspective ca urably strengthen requests to legislatures an nors in the critical process of budget negotiati

4 MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION. tional management – the translation of g policies into operations – is the essential "en of planning. Linking the strategic plan to op or managerial plans is essential if policy goa be realized. Of course, not all strategic goal reflected in operations, due to internal and constraints. Strategic planning is by natur tious and flexible, and should remain so. This

strategic planning sessions must precede budgeting and managerial planning.

Business planners speak of the need to inform line managers of strategic thinking and involve them in its formulation whenever possible. Analagously, state policymakers must seek to involve and inform those persons responsible for policy implementation, from state agency personnel to local officials, administrators, teachers, and so on. Public hearings and meetings with other key officials are important in the early planning stages, once general themes have been set but before any strategy has been crystallized. At the end of the planning process, publication of plans and their rationales will promote understanding of policies which might otherwise appear poorly timed or misguided.

Evaluation of the strategic planning process is critical, since the technique will be new. Expect some resistance and prepare for revision; strategic planning requires unaccustomed kinds of thinking and behavior. Continual evaluation and monitoring is also important within the process itself. Improbable or unforeseen environmental changes must find a prompt response, either in the switch to a contingency plan or the development of new strategies. In other words, careful, ongoing evaluation of both strategic plans and the planning process is essential to success.

5 LEADERSHIP. Just as the strong commitment of the chief executive officer is essential to the success of corporate planning, so strong leadership and advocacy of strategic planning within your organization will be essential for success. If you have been stimulated by the ideas and approaches we have presented here, it is up to you to take the next steps: investigate possible applications to your organization, elicit the interest and commitment of colleagues, and initiate the process of devising a strategic planning method that makes sense for your particular setting.

We at the National Association of State Boards of Education hope that this booklet has indeed sparked your interest in strengthening the basis for education policy decisions. Please contact us for additional assistance. We will gladly provide further direction to you in making strategic planning in education a reality.